

SUNDERLAND NORTH AREA COMMITTEE

8 November 2010

Report of the Chief Executive

Community Action in Sunderland North: Identifying New Issues and Agreeing Actions (2010/2011 Work Plan)

Community Philosophy in the North

1. Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Committee with information on the Creative Communities (Community Philosophy) project that has recently started in the Southwick area.

2. Aims of the Project

- 2.1 Community Philosophy promotes conversations and develops positive relationships between different groups of people. It gets local people talking about the interests, issues and problems they see as affecting their local area.

Building on the successes of work undertaken by Groundwork North East in the Low Moorsley area of Hetton, the Southwick project will work with young people and the wider community to identify key areas where they can make a difference to the environment they live in. Using the Community Philosophy approach of open ended enquiry and discussion allows for debate from different points of view and has had much success in addressing issues of intergenerational tension and is an extremely effective way of engaging young people.

Follow up work from the Community Philosophy sessions depend upon the issues identified but are designed to enable young people to implement work from an environmental perspective, for instance tidying up and planting a patch of unused land or creating a community allotment.

Community Philosophy activities in Southwick have so far included a Thompson's Park 'walkabout' aimed at engaging the local community for them to talk more about their local area and three 'play ranger' style activities in Marley Potts. The project has also been working with Southwick Community Primary School on the Lantern Parade, getting feedback from those involved and linking the event to wider arts and health based activities.

- 2.2 The project in Southwick is funded through North East Empowerment Partnership (NEEP) and was applied for through the Sunderland Partnership via the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Team. The project is being led by Groundwork North East who is also facilitating similar work in Pennywell and the ongoing activities in Low Moorsley. It is anticipated that the three projects will link up at some point in order to share good practice, evaluate learning and to disseminate findings.
- 2.3 The project involves three key partners (Groundwork North East, Sunderland City Council and Gentoo), however, partnership working with locally based organisations is crucial to the success of the endeavour. Among those actively engaged in the process

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so far are Wearmouth Community Development Trust, Oblivion Youth Group, Southwick Neighbourhood Youth Project, Southwick Community Primary School and the Salvation Army.

- 2.4 The project fully complements the overall theme of the Committee of improving the quality of life for residents of the North Area in that it promotes participation, interest and pride in area, raises self-esteem among local residents and develops capacity and capability to enable participation. It is an innovative and pioneering initiative that will contribute to the Committee's work programme in the areas of increasing confidence and trust levels in the community and inclusiveness and community cohesion.
- 2.5 There are three main intended outcomes to the project. These are a) that it empowers young people and makes them feel respected and that their views are heard, b) ensures intergenerational tensions are aired and understood and possible ways of tackling these are explored and c) there is something tangible left behind to remind people of the process and what they achieved.

Among the other outcomes the project will hope to address are that more local people will feel they are able to influence decisions, that they understand more about how decisions are made that will affect where they live, that issues of apathy and lack of engagement are addressed and that relationships between partners and the community are maintained well beyond the life of the project. To help aid this Community Philosophy training sessions for partners involved in the project has been arranged for November to enable the processes and learning to be continued well after the formal project ends on 31 December 2010.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the content of the report and agree to receive proposals from the Community Philosophy project.

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